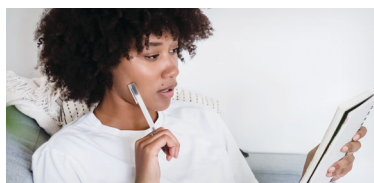


The Connection

JANUARY 2024



Thinking Back and Moving Forward

The start of a new year encourages all of us to reflect on the previous one. What have we accomplished? For what are we grateful?

Runestone Telecom made technology upgrades in 2023 and actively supported our community, which we couldn't have done without customers like you. We can't wait to see what's in store for 2024!

Contact Us

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Hoffman, MN 56339
Phone: 320-986-2013

Office Hours: M-F 8 am to 4:30 pm

Email: rtaoffice@runestone.net

Visit Us: www.runestone.net

Find Us: [!\[\]\(4b7a79268f6ba26c1471d4232fffa85a_img.jpg\)](#) [!\[\]\(87d978583253c9bde1db2d6dfafe8de0_img.jpg\)](#) [!\[\]\(f35e6978c00a4669a23800ac9bf47246_img.jpg\)](#)

Holiday Observed

Runestone Telecom will be closed on Monday, January 1st for the New Year's holiday. Trouble calls will be handled by our on-call technicians.

Runestone
Telecom Association



Let's see what we'll build in the new year

At Runestone Telecom, we do more than build fiber networks. We help build relationships, communities, opportunities, and quality of life. However, we don't do this important work alone. We do it in partnership with all of you, our loyal customers.

Communications technology is all about connections. Our wish for the year ahead is that our local connections grow even stronger.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!



National Popcorn Day is January 19th

What's not to love about popcorn? It's delicious and an excellent source of fiber. Plus, nothing says movie night more than a big bowl of buttery goodness.

You have an extra reason to enjoy this snack on January 19th, since it's National Popcorn Day. While you're munching, check out these fun facts:

- Popcorn started to become popular in the U.S. in the middle 1800s.
- The first commercial popcorn machine was invented by Charles Cretors, a candy store owner, in 1885.
- By 1900, Cretors had horse drawn popcorn wagons going through the streets of Chicago.
- Americans now consume 15 billion quarts of popcorn annually, more than any other country in the world.
- Most of the popcorn produced in the world is grown in the U.S.
- Nebraska leads the Corn Belt in popcorn production.

When you're streaming movies, you need more than popcorn. You also need fast Internet service. Call us at 320-986-2013 to ask about a speed upgrade.

Great Customer Service Starts with Great Employees

Runestone Telecom has an amazing staff of 25, who bring strong experience, specialized skills, and a positive attitude to their jobs each day. If you're one of our employees — or you have a friend or family member who works for us — consider this a public thank you for everything!

It's because of our employees that Runestone Telecom is able to consistently provide an excellent customer experience. Our goal is to make things easy for you, whether you're signing up for service, getting service installed, or seeking answers to a technical issue or account question. It all boils down to this: We treat everyone as we like to be treated!



Back row: Ryan Schonhardt, Braeden Long, and Russ Froemming

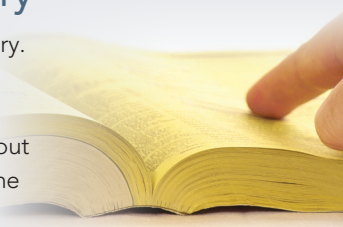
Middle row: Kent Hedstrom, Ken Elvehjem, Pam Randt, Chris Schmiesing, Michelle Martinson, Liza Long, Shawn Engler, Chris Veldhouse, Matt Lloyd, Brady Combs, Nathan Richards, and Curt Hyatt

Front row: Dawn Bumgardner, Nathan Hilbrand, Joe Polzin, Angie Huseeth, Brad Frank, and Christian McGaffey

Not pictured: Cyndi Gulbranson, Dan Perry, Riley Moore, and Gary Ness

Watch for the 2024 Phone Directory

The 2024 phone directory will be delivered in February. You'll notice a slightly different format than what was used in the past. Customer listings will be in the Interlocked Alphabetical section rather than broken out by exchange in the front of the directory. However, the info pages and yellow pages will remain the same.



2024 FUSC Rate Change

Based on the FCC's recently released public notice, the current FUSC Factor of 34.5% is expected to increase to 34.6% beginning 01-01-2024.



These field photos are of work in progress near Wheaton in the Traverse County Phase 1 area of our fiber build.

Field Notes on Our Fiber Builds

Fiber expansion is a game-changer for communities, so Runestone Telecom wants to keep you updated on our progress:

- We've wrapped up construction for 2023 in the Traverse County Phase 1 fiber build project heading into Wheaton. We completed about 20 miles, out of 120, for this project, and we got a total of about 1,000 drops placed.
- In 2023, we brought fiber to the towns of Donnelly, Cyrus, and Kensington.
- With the Herman Fiber-to-the-Home grant project, all that's left for construction are the railroad crossings and 1,500 feet of plowing along the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service area. The Herman project included about 140 mainline miles.

Reminder of Scholarship Opportunities

If there's a high school senior in your family, be sure they check out our website at www.runestone.net for details on the scholarships available through the Foundation for Rural Service. The deadline to apply is February 16th, 2024.



Updates on Cable TV Channel Lineup

Are you a Runestone Cable TV customer? Please take note of these changes:

- **Exiting channels** – Twist, Channel 17.5, will be leaving our lineup on December 22nd, 2023.
- **Confirmed channels** – Negotiations have been completed with these channels, which will remain in our lineup: Channel 11 (KARE), Channel 17.1 (KARE HD), Channel 17.2 (Court TV), Channel 17.3 (True Crime Network), and Channel 17.4 (Quest).

In our December newsletter, we listed nine other cable channels in negotiations, and those discussions were still in progress at the time this January newsletter went to print. We'll update you when we know more.

What to Do If You Fell for a Scam

Scams can be quite convincing. If you've sent money to scammers, immediately contact the company associated with your payment method:

- **Debit/credit card:** Call the issuer and ask for the fraud department. Give the date of the payment, identify it as a fraudulent charge, and see if they'll reverse the charge.
- **Your bank account:** Call your bank and ask them to flag the transaction and return your money.
- **A gift card:** Call the issuer and ask for the fraud department. Say you've been the victim of a scam and request a refund.
- **A cash app like Venmo:** Report the fraud to the company directly to see if they can reverse the payment.

For the scam to be labeled a crime, you'll also need to file a police report. Banks may need a copy of the report to issue a refund.

New Members

Cyrus

Deetz, Janis..... 320-795-2757

Elbow Lake

Correction: We apologize for the misprint in the December newsletter. This is the correct listing.

The Freedom House..... 218-685-2000

Kensington

Martinson, Mark 320-965-2018

Tintah

TAK Farms Inc..... 218-369-2000

Villard

Chan, Denise &
Mertens, Mark..... 320-201-9292

January is National Clean Up Your Computer Month

You count on your computer to complete so many tasks for you each day. So, it's reasonable to give your computer a little extra attention once a year. National Clean Up Your Computer Month, observed annually in January, is a reminder to do just that.

Here are a few "clean up" suggestions for you:

- Organize your computer's desktop.
- Delete old files to help free up space.
- Go through your inbox and delete or move messages as needed.
- Update your email contacts list to eliminate the clutter of old contacts.
- Make sure your bookmarks are in order by making any site additions and deletions that reflect your current browsing habits.

Don't stop here, however. You also need to clean the exterior of your computer. First, shut it down and unplug it. Then use compressed air on vents, USB ports, keys, etc. You can safely wipe down everything with a microfiber cloth, and clean between the crevices with a cotton swab.



Don't Suffer the Buffer During **BIG** Games



The last thing you want is for buffering to delay the action while you're streaming big games — especially when family and friends have gathered to watch. Fortunately, there are things you can do to help prevent this problem.

Consider using an Ethernet cable.

You can connect a device to the Internet through a wired or wireless connection. A wired connection, which involves running an Ethernet cable from your router to a device, provides a faster and more consistent Internet connection. So, for the most reliable streaming experience, connect your streaming device to your router with an Ethernet cable rather than using WiFi.

Check the layout of your WiFi network.

If you can't (or would rather not) connect via an Ethernet cable, the next best option is to watch big games on a TV in the same room as your router. This is because the shorter the distance between your router and your streaming device, the better your chances for uninterrupted performance. You may have trouble with your stream if your router is in a different part of the house, particularly if it's on a different floor.

Upgrade your Internet speed.

If you regularly experience buffering, your current speed may simply not be fast enough to meet the demands of your household. The most common form of buffering occurs when your Internet speed is too slow to download the amount of data needed. In this scenario, your device will buffer the data for the video and then begin playing it when there is enough data downloaded to prevent lag in the stream. If the stream reaches the point where it no longer has enough data downloaded, it will pause the video, and you'll have to wait again while more data downloads. Signing up for a faster Internet speed will eliminate this annoying issue.

Call us at 320-986-2013 if you have questions about your WiFi network or Internet plan with Runestone Telecom. We're on your team and are happy to help!